

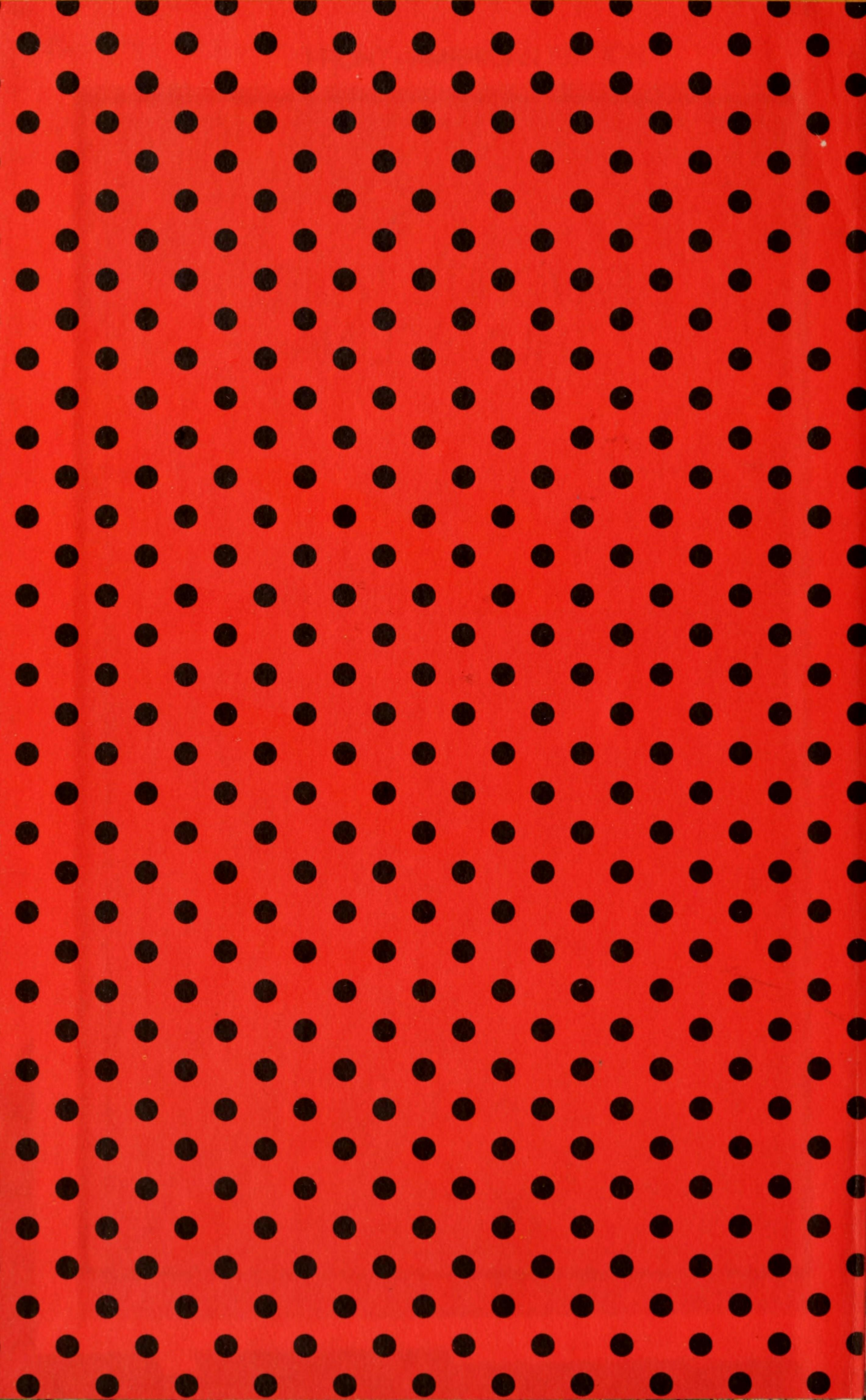
FAVOURITE TALES

# Thumbelina



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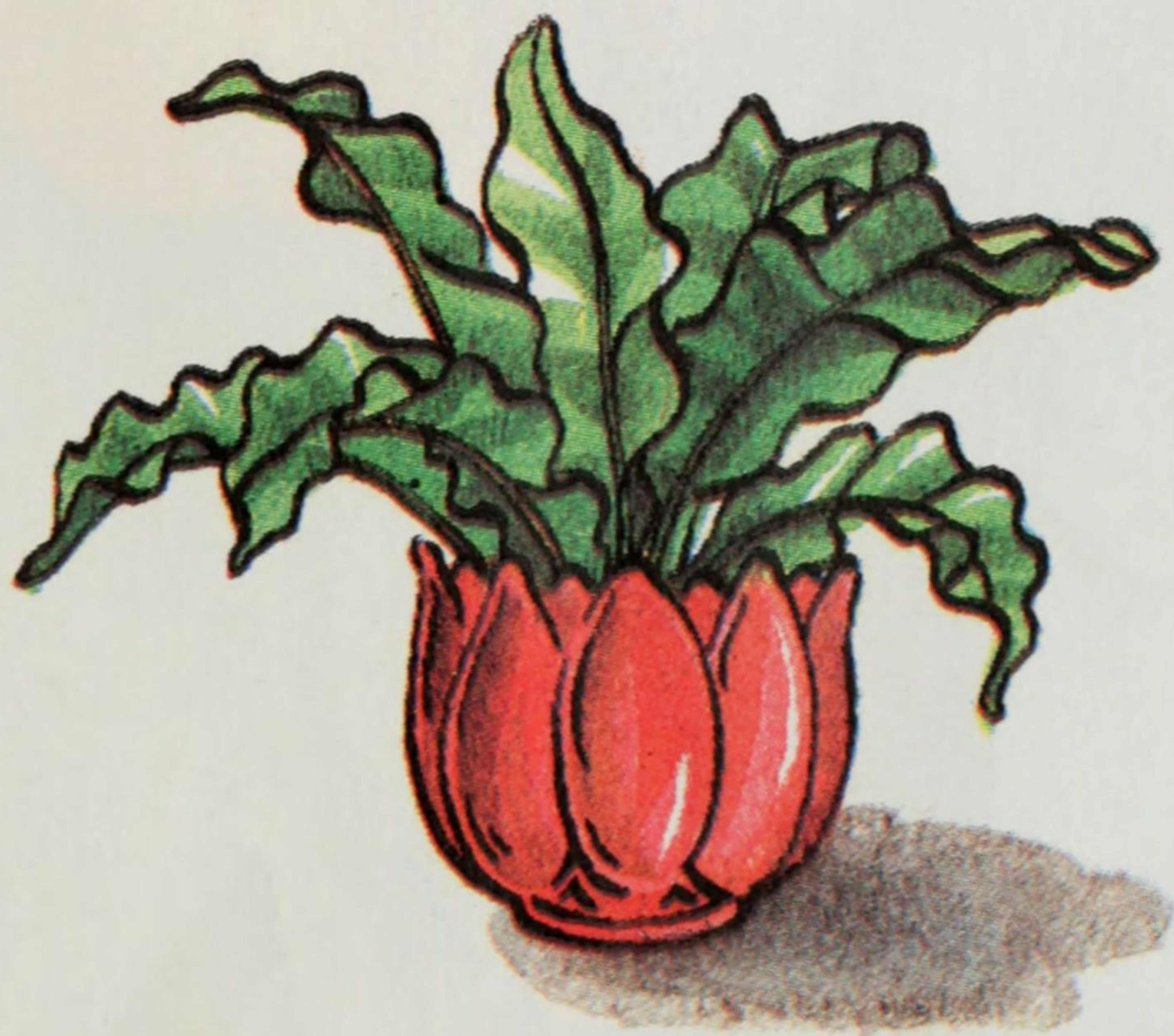




Once upon a time there was a woman who longed to have a little girl of her own to love and care for. As time passed, and she had no children, she became very sad.

Then one day she heard of a wise old woman who could help, and she went to see her.

The wise old woman smiled. "Take this tiny seed and plant it in a flower pot," she said, "and you will have your little girl."





The woman took the seed home and planted it. Soon green shoots appeared, and a flower bud grew between them.

At last the bud opened out into a beautiful yellow flower. And right in the center was a little girl, no bigger than the woman's thumb.

The woman looked down at the girl. "How pretty you are!" she said. "You are so small and dainty, I'm going to call you Thumbelina."













The woman was happy to have a little girl at last, and she took good care of Thumbelina.

Thumbelina was happy too. She sang songs in her soft, clear voice as she played on the kitchen table. At night she slept in a bed made from a tiny walnut shell.

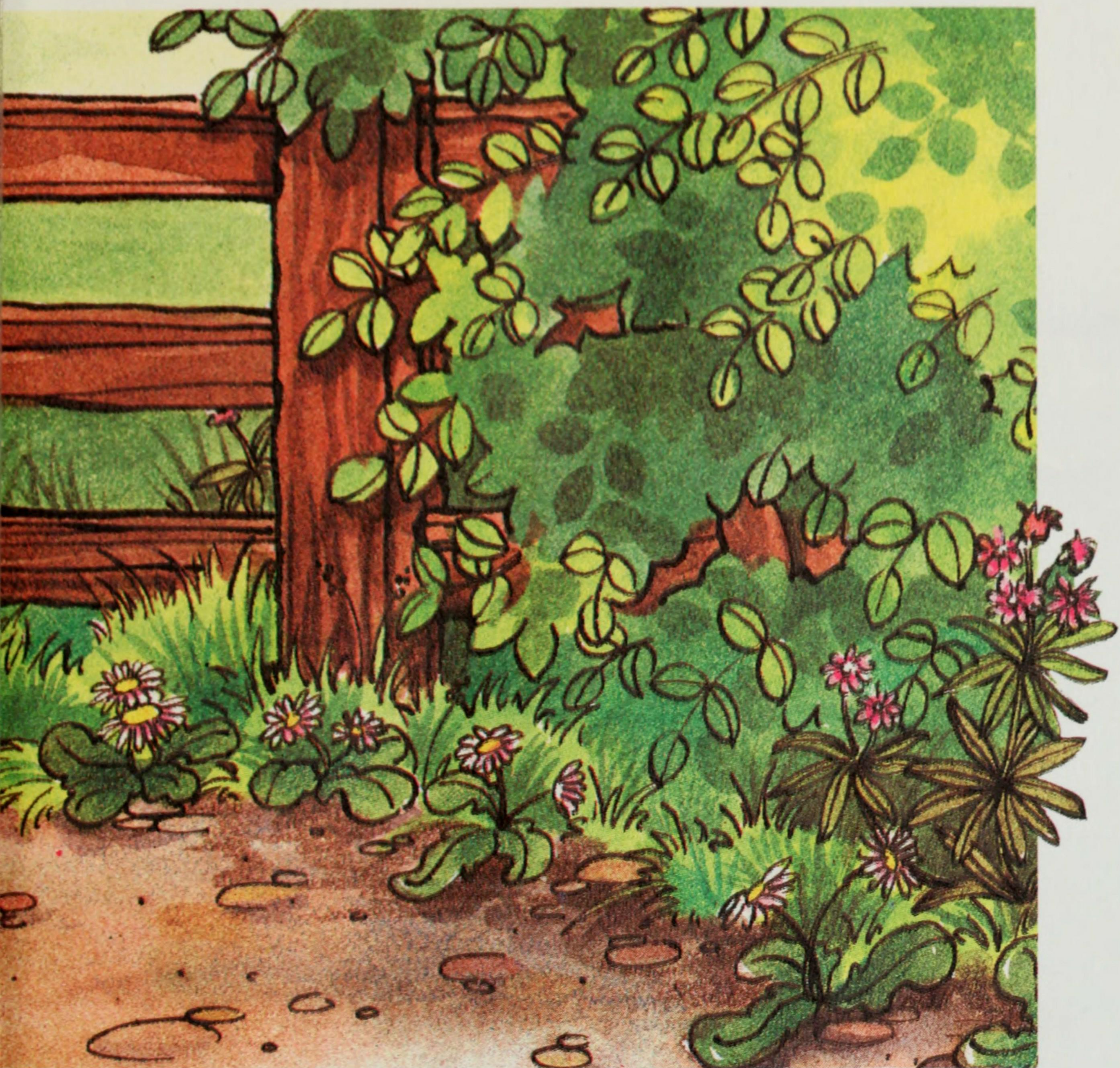






Then one day a big toad heard Thumbelina's singing and hopped in through the window. "What a pretty wife you would make for my son!" she said. And she carried Thumbelina away to the stream where she lived.





The toad left the tiny girl all alone on a lily pad and went to find her son.

Thumbelina didn't want to marry an ugly toad at all, but she didn't know how she could escape.



After a while some friendly fish came swimming by. "Please help me," Thumbelina begged. "The toad wants me to marry her son. I must find a way to escape!"

All the fish felt very sorry for Thumbelina. So they spent the whole day nibbling through the stem of the lily pad, and at last Thumbelina was able to float away.

As she drifted down the stream, Thumbelina met a beautiful butterfly. It took her to a pretty forest where she could make a home for herself.



Thumbelina was happy in the forest, eating the nuts and berries that she found, and playing with her friends the butterflies.











But soon the days grew colder. When winter came, it was harder for Thumbelina to find food. Her friends the butterflies disappeared, and she was alone.

Then one day Thumbelina met a friendly field mouse who was going into her little house.

“I’m so hungry,” Thumbelina said.  
“Can you please help me?”

The field mouse took pity on the girl.  
“Of course,” she said. “You can stay with me in my warm house and share my food.”







Thumbelina lived happily with the field mouse for a long time. But one day the field mouse said, “I can’t keep you here much longer. Why don’t you marry my friend the mole, who lives next door? He has a much bigger house than mine. And he will take care of you next winter.”

Thumbelina did not want to marry the mole. He lived under the ground and knew nothing of the sunny world outside.







Next day the mole visited Thumbelina.  
“Please come and see where I live,”  
he said.







Thumbelina did not want to hurt the mole's feelings, so she followed him into the tunnel that led to his dark underground home.

“Be careful,” said the mole. “There is a dead bird in here.”



Thumbelina saw that the bird was a swallow. He was not dead, just very cold and weak.





Thumbelina felt sorry for the swallow.  
She covered him with dried leaves  
and grass to keep him warm.











Thumbelina looked after the swallow all through the long, cold winter. By summer he was strong and well and ready to go back to his own home.

Thumbelina said good-bye to the swallow as he flew off with his friends. She was happy that he was well, but she knew that she would miss him. And she was sad to think that before the next winter came, she would have to marry the mole and live underground.







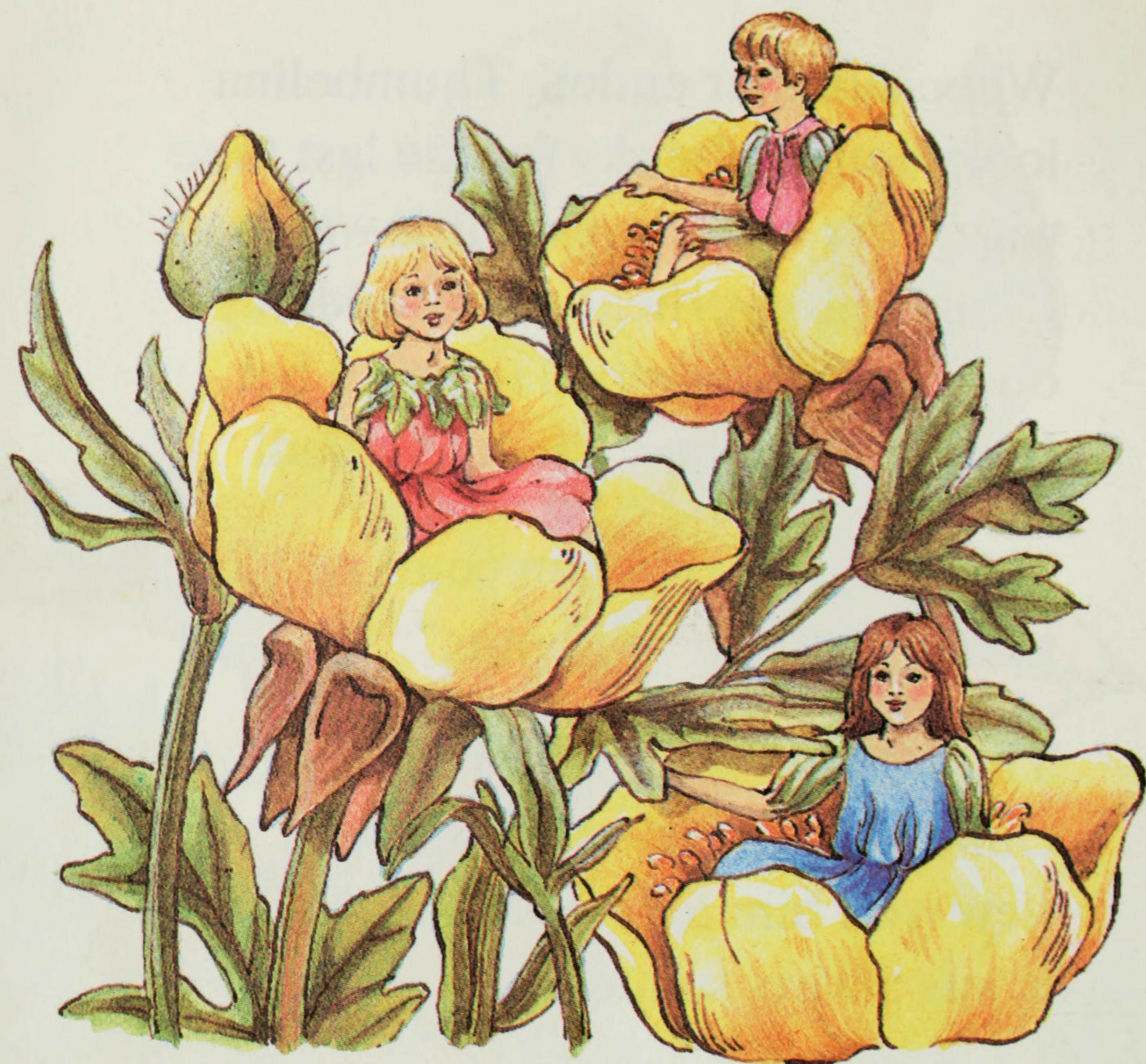
When summer ended, Thumbelina looked up at the sky for the last time with tears in her eyes. Birds were flying high overhead, and suddenly one of them swooped down to her. It was the swallow she had saved!

“I am going to a warm country,” he told her. “Come with me.”

Thumbelina was overjoyed. She climbed onto the swallow’s back and flew with him to a faraway land where it was always summer.







This land was full of flowers. And inside every one lived a tiny person, just like Thumbelina!

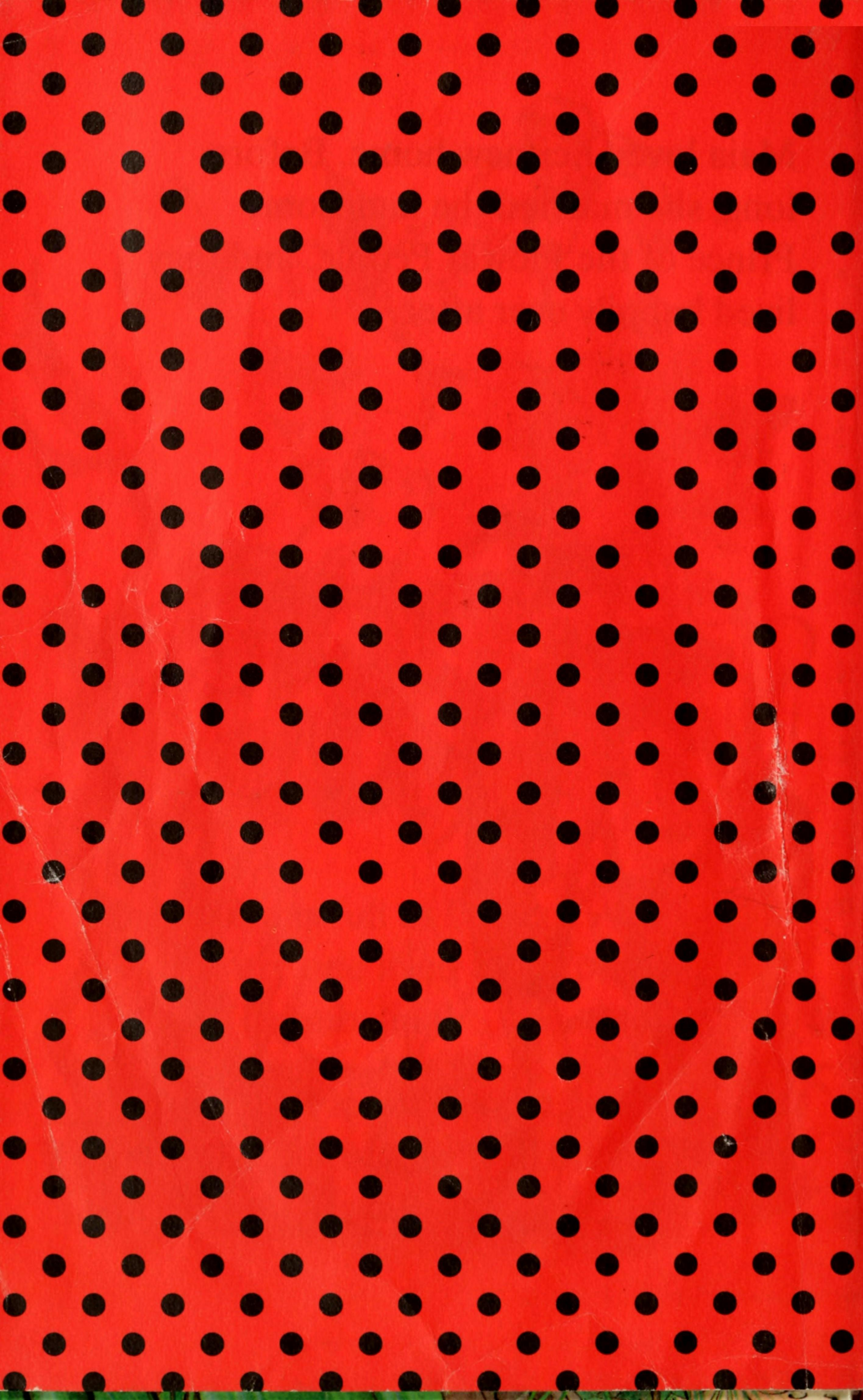
“We are the Flower People,” they said, “and this is your true home. We will call you Maia.”



Maia loved her new home. Before long, she married the handsome Prince of the Flower People, and they lived happily ever after.













# FAVOURITE TALES

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